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FLOOR DEBATE

April 30, 2001 LB 305, 543

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: One minute.

SENATOR RAIKES: In my view, we need to go a different direction. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Raikes. Senator Chambers, on your motion to amend LB 543.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, we should be considering what the body intends to do with reference to the teacher issue. I'm intending to fight LB 305 tooth and nail; stop it absolutely if I can. I bring it up in connection with my amendment here because people have been talking about this loan forgiveness program being the savior. This is the safety net. This is the fallback position. I think that is ridiculous. It is a mere pittance. And as Senator Raikes pointed out, it is not a salary enhancement program by any stretch of the imagination. If people get these loans and decide they don't want to stay in Nebraska, and leave, they just have some free money. Nobody is going to pursue them. Twenty-five hundred dollars is not enough to cause an expenditure equaling that amount or greater than that amount. People have bugged out on federal loans. The federal government has far more tools, much longer arms, much stronger fingers for grasping, than the state could ever hope to equal. And people don't pay those loans. So if these are not paid, it's just money gone. There is nothing in this bill to ensure that people will stay here and teach. If the only thing keeping them here is \$2,500, they're not going anywhere anyway. This program cannot be justified by any rationale. I understand thoroughly the fight that Senator Thompson is putting up on the bill, the appropriation, that is. She fought for the bill that was enacted. We can develop a feeling of proprietorship in a bill that we successfully navigate through the Legislature. However, right now the reality is that not much money is available to be spent on the things we would like to spend money on. Priorities are going to have to be set. If this money is left in the budget and it goes across the floor, LB 543, this budget bill, is not going to be returned to strike this money. It will be too late. Anything to be done on this bill should be done today. This money, this \$2.7 million, should be stricken from